

A Year of "The Bookman"

By JOHN FARRAR.

TO command an editor to confess his sins after only a year of sinning is little short of heartless. To generalize concerning literary America after a fifteen months' view places one at the side of the English visitors to the United States who return to London suburbs, where they rearrange for us in writing our manners and morals after having observed the calm bosoms of club women banked before a platform or rising over a teacup. After all, a casual observer may well be led to the conclusion that literature in America depends largely on a choice between one lump or two, or even, in certain circles, three. We confess that a year of editing has taught us that if one seldom spills a cup of Oolong on a Persian carpet one is more apt to please one's hostess, and that if she be perchance a lady novelist, one may cherish a fonder hope that she will favor the editorial desk with an article. Indeed, the afternoon tea and the Women's Literary Society must not be overlooked in any serious discussion of present day writing; for is it not in such an atmosphere that our young poets are reared?

It is probably some anthropological throw back in us as a nation that inspires this tuft hunting of ours. We like lions. We are willing to pursue them. We create social cages for them and lo! before the cages. If this worship of people who accomplish things, artistic and otherwise, is a weakness it is a pleasant weakness, and it is, perhaps, the recognition of this in ourselves and our readers that accounts for whatever success the *Bookman* has had. There have been, of course, more solid stuffs in the making of a book magazine; criticism must be there, the best one can secure; there must be biographical and autobiographical novels, editorials that will demand thought and provoke discussion, a touch of humor here and a note of real passion there. We ourselves are a romantic, however. Our favorite book is Lawrence Sterne's "A Sentimental Journey." Naturally, then, the most exciting thing in this *Bookman* year for us has been the wide and sudden contact with people whom we had always admired from the distance of the Vermont hills. Quite frankly, here was a country mouse allowed to scamper among the lions, and, since he enjoyed that privilege, surely there must be others who would want to know how Sherwood Anderson used his fork or what Mrs. Gertrude Atherton was planning as her next novel. As a reporter our interest had been in observing and recording the reactions of criminals. Perhaps we may be forgiven, then, for approaching the literary man in much the same spirit. He interests us as a phenomenon. That there is a striking similarity between the poetic temperament and the finer criminal mood is a subject for another article. At any rate, here we were with a perfect right to knock at Miss Amy Lowell's door without the expectation of being turned away as a soft young fool with sentimental ambitions for a signed photograph.

So the literary circus performed. Here was New York, to which, soon or late, most writers drift; New York with its circle of columnists waving whips, real or imagined, at the edge of rings where the clique of pet lions danced; New York with its astonishing Poetry Society of America, an organization which, in its earnest efforts to standardize and systematize poems, must be unique in the history of art; New York with its Greenwich Village, where poetry and prose, under the spell of psychoanalysis, became media for the expression of conscious love triangles, given a pseudo originality by an atmosphere of parrot cages and doubtful sanitation. Here was New York with its clubs, where the haven of novelists who have long since ceased to write novels, yet find it difficult to stomach the work of those who are now popular even as they once were; that one, the gathering place of the society intellectual, who demand amusements and rely on contacts with the stage and the ballroom to supply enough scandal to keep them from contemplating too often the actualities of life. There are guests in

New York, too, though with the waning fashion for long hair they are becoming two rooms and a bath, where sincere workmen struggle along with the art which means more than a surety of bacon and eggs for breakfast. Not too often, however, does one encounter the man who is definitely contented with coffee only. New York, too, with its literary magazines, one keeping itself determinedly virgin in its critical life, another struggling for a formula which, while preserving it from senescence, will not at the same time drive away a comfortably respectable clientele. How many rings there are! But no editor can afford to forget that all across the country there are other circles just as insular, just as fond of pet lions of their own. Chicago, with its cult of Sandburg and Anderson, New Orleans with its "Double Dealer," Missouri with its Governor issuing a proclamation for the first Statewide "book week" in the country, Richmond with its "Reviewer," San Francisco, Selma in Alabama, New Mexico, Salt Lake City in Utah—circles here, societies there, the Penwomen and the Midland Authors, even Europe with its American expatriates, "Broom" edited from Italy. International, say its editors, but American in its financial aspect at least. What of all this? Who shall say that the glants of this literary period shall not arise from some outlying cult? Log rolling is practiced as strenuously on the banks of Salt Lake as at the famous round table in the Hotel Algonquin or across the desks of the *Chicago Daily News*. Is there a critical colossus so sure of his faculty that he dare claim infallibility of judgment as he watches this fascinating show? Personally, we prefer to let them all in. In this magazine about books and authors you shall have your place. Just what place that is? Oh, well, that is a different matter!

Apart from their significance in a broad sense, how delightful these personalities are! To hear Henry Holt tell of early publishing days or Major George Haven Putnam recount a meeting with Thackeray is an experience not soon forgotten. An explanation by Zane Grey of the integrity of his literary effort is a valuable adventure in the psychology of the popular novelist. One of our most delightful correspondents here is Mrs. Gene Stratton-Porter, whose accounts of nature pilgrimages in California remind us of early days in the woods along Lake Champlain, when the discovery of a ram's head orchid was far more important than the publication of a literary masterpiece. When Mary Roberts Rinehart pays a call on her son, who sits at the desk next ours, we give up work for the afternoon to listen to stories of a recent trip or an explanation of how a novel is prepared and written. Sinclair Lewis, on his way to Europe, dashes in, captures us and takes us out for a mad drive in a taxi, while he says farewell to all the book-sellers in town and tells us what he really thinks of the middle West. The latest novelist of the small town arrives with his manuscript, which he claims to be an "answer to 'Main Street,'" and on his heels comes Pascal d'Angelo, the day laborer poet, to exhibit the torn pages of his first dictionary, from which he claims to have developed his unusual command of the English tongue. We are allowed to go quietly to tea at Willa Cather's, where we listen to James L. Ford tell of other days in the literary roar and scramble, or to Mary Austin's, where we discuss rhythm and the development of American poetry. In Chicago we see the famous Marshall Field bookstore and its creator, Marcella Burns Hanner, as energetic a merchandiser of books as we have ever known, or attend the moving pictures with Carl Sandburg, who explains their merits in his deep tones and then takes us to the top of the Masonic Temple to introduce us to a race horse enthusiast. In Vermont we visit Robert Frost in his cottage, with its quiet family and its quaint atmosphere, and, plodding through a snowstorm, find Dorothy Canfield's hospitality a warm relief from the blizzard. All this, you see, is in the tradition of Sterne. There is a distinct thrill in discovering a poet in the moss room of a ship lying at anchor, and in putting him to work on a novel of the sea, or to capture a lazy humorist and lock him in a room with nothing but a typewriter and bread and water until he turns out copy for the waiting presses. There is the moment, too, when the manuscript of "Three Soldiers" appears on one's

desk or Donald Ogden Stewart blows into the office with the just conceived idea of his "Parody Outline of History." This is the romance of editing. This, too, is the romance of literature, when we do not take it too seriously.

Last year the stir in the world of popular writing shifted from a somewhat futile controversy between the writers of so-called free verse and those who wrote in a more conventional manner, to the tearing down and putting together of reputations revolving about the small town novel. This year the poor younger generation has come in for its share of praise and condemnation. This is healthy enough. If the younger generation were a model child it would sit by the fire and knit while the world went on outside and little resulted. Any active child needs its punishment. We have heard that a baby is not considered healthy unless it howls occasionally, and the small boy who does not sooner or later learn how to use his fists becomes a sad citizen. The members

of the younger school of writers today are probably no more radical than were their detractors at the diaper stage. Some of them are noisy and careless, others work hard and know the uses of silence. To defend them as a class is to forget that their prime characteristic is a sometimes blatant individuality. To the lady who made the mot that "the younger generation produced without pain and gave birth to dolls" one may hold out as answer Robert Nathan's carefully conceived and executed "Autumn." What we should like to ask our elders to remember is that the flip youths who, whether by their own efforts or the accidents of life, have achieved a certain rather unpleasant publicity do not always represent their fellows. They cannot even safely be taken as pointing the general trend of thought.

That young men now have a better chance for publication and for quick recognition is not so much, I think, a sign of debased literary standards as it is a healthful display of a general increase in book interest. Publishing

conditions are rapidly improving. There is a definite hunger on the part of the women—and the appetite is not exclusively feminine—for some indefinite thing which they perhaps call culture. This hunger they are satisfying by a reaching out for books and book information. We feel this interest here. From practically every city in the country and from small towns in every State come weekly letters which tell us of local literary activities and of local literary heroes. This movement is not urban, it is nationwide. At the risk of being a Pollyanna we should like to close by saying that to be writing books or editing a book magazine during the coming ten years is to have the promise of an audience which, though it may increase slowly in discrimination, will increase so rapidly in numbers as to assure the productivity at least of American literature. How important the period will be from the standpoint of the ages only the wisest sages may speculate and only the Muses on Olympus know.

HISTORY always repeats. It is repeating now, for we are back in the Dark Ages—sex, money and murder crazed as in the Eleventh century, when "the patrician demi-mondaines dominated Church, State and Society," and would have wiped out Christianity had it not been divinely protected as promised. Today religion doesn't function among our body-brained fashionables and so-called intellectuals; real homes are no-norties, babies are the helpless victims of ante-natal murder—if born, only unwanted accidents of birth. Divorce is rampant, "it's the Devil's way" as in "Beauty and Nick." Nine women out of ten who use the courts as a means to an end are rampish enough to live in idleness on the alimony of their helpless male victims. There is no middle course for woman, she leads to Heaven or lures to Hell. If foolish enough to marry it is 1 to 7 to 1 to 3 on, according to where you marry, that your home will be only a rough and tumble chute to the Divorce Court Chambers. Read and re-read "Beauty and Nick" and "My Unknown Chum." Save them for those you love until they mature and begin life's battles with our fast decaying civilization. Read them yourself first, and return if not ideal comrades for you and yours.

—if you want a Comrade, a Chum—or a Husband!

—use eye, mind, tongue, and soul to get one like Nick. If successful, you shall possess the greatest of all male prizes—a man who will protect you from himself. Father-trained youngsters of the Nick mould are as rare as the "stuttering woman" in "Keystones of Thought."

Every man who loves or ever will love a woman MUST read "Beauty and Nick." Every woman, single or married, SHOULD read "Beauty and Nick." Every husband and every wife who prefer a baby to a dog—a home to a domestic kennel—will SURELY read "Beauty and Nick."

SIR PHILIP GIBBS' BEST WORK "BEAUTY AND NICK"

If you want a friend, a pal—a WIFE!—look for one like the Lonely Lady in BEAUTY AND NICK. Such as she is rarely to be found in this the age of sex and shekels—surely not in the endless procession of poppy-painted dames and damsels, young as youth, wrinkled as an O'Shanter witch; all with skirts so tight as to make them goat-gaited; so short that these bogus beauties have turned the most beautiful avenues of the world into mere leg lanes,—free rivals of the sash-clad ladies of a Broadway burlesque.

Preachy? Not a single or married line of it. Problem stuff? Not a bit of it. How can there be anything problematical or mathematical in a love, jilt-lured but straight from the heart and soul of an honest Husband-Reared youth like Nick?

And how can there be anything worth a chalked cipher in the scattered affection of a woman brainy, brilliant, beautiful as Beauty, but minus of soul as a mummy, and with a heart that shifts and softens only to the love whispers of a trousered check book?



Edition after edition so quickly sold that for nearly four weeks we were unable to supply a copy

BEAUTY AND NICK

Note: If your son, your daughter, are at University or College send them "My Unknown Chum" and "Beauty and Nick." They will like both—need both, now, and surely so later on in life.

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